

Literature, &c.

HARD TIMES;

OR, PRACTICAL ECONOMY.

By Mrs. Thayer.

ONE evening Edward Landon returned from his business, wearied and harassed in mind and body by the daily increasing difficulties that hung like a storm cloud over all persons engaged in trade. Stoppage had occurred in houses hitherto supposed to stand so firm as to defy all times, however unfavorable. Merchants met as usual, it is true, on 'change, but the bustling activity that formerly characterized such meetings, was exchanged for suspicious whispering and anxious looks. Confidence between man and man was shaken, and nothing was heard but the cry of 'hard times.' Edward returned home on the evening alluded to, his spirits more than usually depressed, which not even the happy home that welcomed him, the affectionate smiles of his wife, or the joyful voices of his children could raise. Ellen, with the quick eye of affection, detected the changes in her husband, but waited patiently till the little ones had gone to bed, and then addressed him—

'What ails my husband to night, what has happened to make him so dull?'

'Ellen, have you courage to bear a reverse of fortune?'

'I have courage' to bear anything with you and for you.'

'God bless you, dear one. But you know little of the bitter reality of poverty.'

'My husband forgets that it was his generous love that rescued me from poverty.'

'Not such poverty, Ellen, as I fear you must now learn to bear. You have never wanted the comfort and even the elegancies of life. You have never lived without a servant.'

'But I can Edward. Whenever you tell me that it is necessary, you shall see that I can live without a servant. Have no fear for me, you know how bravely I can work. Do but explain your difficulties to me, let me know all the evil that you dread, keep back nothing. It is a mistaken kindness which leads a man, from fear of giving pain to his wife, to conceal from her the state of his affairs, or from a want of confidence in her strength of mind, to allow her to continue in a course of thoughtless extravagance, which hastens the evils he would conceal. Many failures might be avoided if men would be more communicative to their wives and not keep everything locked up within their own bosoms, because women do not understand such things. They can learn to understand them at any rate; and men would find their advantage in teaching them. A true hearted woman cannot but feel interested in her husband. She will gratefully receive his confidence, and if she does not at first understand the technicalities of business, she will have an incentive to learn that she may advise with her husband upon what equally concerns both. Open your heart to me Edward, tell me all your troubles, and you know, woman though I be, I will meet them unflinchingly.'

'Why Ellen you are really eloquent. You shall know all. I will never keep anything from you.—There is a rumour abroad of an extensive failure in the city, which, if it proves true, will be inevitably followed by many others. I know that in that case, Henry's ruin is certain, and my business is so connected with his, that mine must shortly follow. My only hope now is that the report may prove false.'

'Can nothing be done. Cannot the warning you have received be turned to good account?'

'No, nothing can be done, unless I can raise a sum of money sufficient to answer the demands which will be immediately made upon me, and at the present crisis that is impossible.'

'We can at least reduce our household expenses and be prepared for the worst.'

'Well, you understand that better than I do; I leave it all to your judgment.'

'What a blessing is a good wife. Well may they be called a crown to the husband. Edward's heart seemed lightened of half its burden after his conversation with Ellen. A good night's rest restored his usual good spirits and decision of character. He left his home in the morning, his mind nerved to meet the difficulties that threatened him, and to overcome or to bear them manfully. Well for him that he was so prepared, for he had difficulties to encounter that called for the firmness of which he was master. The report of the preceding day was too soon confirmed. The distress which ensued may be imagined.

Hundreds whose prospects a few months before had been bright, were involved in utter ruin. Henry's failure, as Edward anticipated, soon followed, and his own came quickly after. So far the situation of the brothers was similar, their fortunes lost, their prospects darkened; a like gloomy fate seemed to hold them in thrall. But in Edward's heart there was a joy unknown to that of his brother, in the thought of his wife, his Ellen, who in weal or woe, he knew would ever smile his welcome home. Of her cheerful resignation to whatever fortune awaited them, he was equally certain, and this assurance kept alive hope in his soul. Already his fancy was sketching plans for the future, when his brother entered, his pale and haggard looks proclaimed the warfare within. He spoke as he entered—

'Oh, Edward, this is dreadful! What are we to do?'

'Do! why, as other men do who are similarly situated. We have the consolation of knowing that no dishonor attaches to our name. We are unfortunate; but let us not despair; brighter days will come.'

'But our families, Edward: what will become of them?'

'Why, Henry, this is unlike you. Are our families the only one who, amid this general distress, experience a reverse of fortune? Cheer up my brother; we are young, with health and strength unimpaired; we must, as the song says, 'try again.'

'How can you, Edward, talk so calmly upon such a subject? I thought you loved your family.'

'And do I not love them? For my children, I would peril my life; and my wife, my beautiful devoted Ellen! Henry, if you knew the consolation she has afforded me during these trying times—the firmness, the fortitude, she has displayed, when with a faltering tongue I have told her my fears;—her generous self denials. If you knew my wife, you would not ask if I loved her.'

'How then can you speak so calmly of distress, beneath which she may sink?'

'Because I know that she will not sink beneath it. I have unbounded confidence in her. You will see how she will meet the distress of which you speak. Thoughts of her children's bright prospects may for a moment that she will allow regret for the past to hinder exertion for the future. Come let us go home.'

'I cannot go home. Would that I could feel the same confidence in Amelia, that you do in your wife. I dread seeing her. I dread the burst of grief that will follow the announcement of our misfortune. I cannot go home. I cannot bear her reproaches.'

'Reproaches! surely, Henry, you do your wife injustice. She cannot reproach you for the misfortunes which you had not the power to avert. She cannot be so unjust, so unfeeling.'

'I do not know that it could be called unjust.—You know Amelia had a handsome fortune from her father. It is but natural she could feel the loss.'

'Undoubtedly she must feel it, but she must also feel that it is as great to you as to herself. Moreover no blame attaches to you.'

Edward's representations were in vain; he could not prevail upon his brother to go home, until he offered to accompany him, and break the intelligence to Amelia. I will not attempt to describe the scene that followed her becoming acquainted with her husband's failure, and loss of property. She absolutely raved, accused him of swindling and of robbing her; called upon him to restore her fortune, to give her back her situation in society, declared that she would not live to be scorned and mocked at by her former friends. Henry at first attempted to calm her, to represent to her his own innocence. She would not listen to him, and finally wearied and despairing he seated himself and bore in silence the vituperation with which she loaded him.

Edward turned in pity and disgust from the scene, and hastened to his own home. There all was peace. Though the whole world was dark and the horizon black with gathering clouds, there shone within his quiet home the undying light of affection.

Ellen had heard the bad news before he arrived, and was prepared to soothe and comfort him. She was not insensible to the extent of their misfortunes, nor the trials that awaited them, but she had been early taught to bow her head in uncomplaining resignation to whatever her Heavenly Father sent.—The lessons learned from the lips and practice of a tenderly beloved mother were not forgotten in the hour of trial.

She thought of her children deprived of the advantages which wealth procures, and she wept. Then came thoughts of her husband, of his disappointed hopes, of the disgrace which she feared his quick sense of honor would attack to this failure, how much he would need support and comfort, and she knelt at the footstool of her God and prayed for strength, not only to bear her own trials, but to alleviate those of her husband. As she prayed a calm fell upon her heart, and the remembrance of many blessings still mercifully spared to them, arose before her; and prayer commenced in supplication, was ended in thanks and praise.

She sought her children, and went with them to the little parlour, where, at evening, Edward was accustomed to find his family. She arranged the room to give it its ordinary appearance drew up her work table to the fire, as if she had been employed as usual, and then joined the sports of her children.

Ellen was thus employed, when Edward entered. For a moment he had hesitated before opening the door. He heard the merry voices of his little children, and sweet tones of his wife. They were happy, and he must mar their happiness. His thoughts were becoming extremely painful, when his oldest child asked his mother, 'what father staid away so late for?' The answer determined him. 'Your father, my child, will soon come, I hope. I cannot think why he staid so late,'—then continuing, as if to herself, 'He surely does not doubt me; he cannot fear to tell me what has happened. I trust his confidence in me is not weakened.' Edward now opened the door, and she rose to meet him. 'I am so glad you have come home,' she said; 'I know all, and am ready to redeem my promise, to bear any reverse of fortune for and with you. I have already given the servants warning. Poor things! I felt more for them at that moment than for myself. They all begged, that if I ever required them again, they might come back. I promised what they asked, but at the same time told them I had no idea that I should ever be in a situation to take them again. You shall see what a nice housewife I shall make.'

The husband could not speak; a silent pressure of the hand he held in his, was the only answer.

A TRAITOR'S DOOM.

BY H. R. ADDISON.

As our regiment marched sullenly along, I could see the tear glisten in the eye of many a hardy soldier. So true it is, as Bayley has expressed it in his beautiful ballad,

'Go search the foremost ranks in danger's
dark career,
Be sure the hand most daring there has wiped
away a tear.'

Yes, the sunburnt warrior, whose lion courage I had almost wondered at the evening before when scaling the walls of the fort out of which we were now marching, held down his head, and uttered an involuntary sigh as we passed the spot where our sepoy were still busy, assisted by a few Europeans, in burying our dead. The number of men we had lost was far beyond that which we had anticipated. Our well-laid plans had been made known to the enemy, and stratagem had been successfully employed to oppose our attack; and in a word, we had been basely betrayed by one whom he fancied our ally. The traitor had fallen into our hands, and little shrift had been allowed to him. We were now marching forth to his execution—sternly going to behold the last moments of one whom we had formerly looked upon as our true, our valued friend; for he who had allowed the ties of country to rise paramount to the duties he owed as an honorable ally, was a chief of considerable power. With an education semi European, he had hitherto fought with us nobly, and tho' a youth of little more than twenty years of age, had already been twice noticed in general orders. He was handsome in no common degree; a more affable and kind-hearted Indian I never met.—He was of a high caste, and commanded a considerable native force. In an evil hour he had listened to emissaries, who painted us to him as the enslavers of his country. His relatives had espoused the opposite side; his brother had been killed in an action which had taken place. But all this, I am convinced would have never tempted Dewallah Surhat (so I will call him) to have betrayed us. How that deep, that dreadful task was accomplished I never bave, I never shall learn. Suffice it to say, Dewallah became a traitor, an unsuccessful traitor. Convicted of the offence, he had been doomed to die. The only grace accorded him had been to choose the manner

of his death. He unhesitatingly preferred the one I am about to describe, and to behold this we were marching out of C—— the morning when this sketch opens.

On arriving at the ground we found three sepoy corps, and a detachment of horse artillery, already on the spot. As they only awaited our coming to complete the arrangements, after a half of a few minutes attention was called, and we formed a hollow square, in'o which a tumbrel quickly drove. From it the prisoner, in company with the provost marshal and his deputy descended. Never did I behold him look more firmly intrepid. His air was rather that of grave triumph and martial dignity, than of convicted guilt. Had I been told to pick out a traitor from the assembled troops, he would have been the last person I should have fixed upon. He walked firmly to the centre of the square, and facing the brigadier general in command, with a look of unshaken courage, bowed as he took his station, and calmly awaited the reading of the sentence.

The Deputy-judge-advocate was desired to read out an account of the proceedings of the general court martial held at C—— on the prisoner, Dewallah Surhat, lately commanding the auxiliary native field force, charged with having on the night of the 15th of October, 18—, willingly and treacherously betrayed the British forces with whom he was apparently acting as an ally, and thereby, &c.

While the proceedings were being read, the prisoner was much agitated whenever the treason he had been guilty of was alluded to. He evidently was much pained. The convulsive movements of his countenance showed how acutely he felt his position, but when the whole trial had been recited, when the verdict of 'guilty' was pronounced, he seemed suddenly to recover his immobility. When the sentence of death was read out, he did not quail in the slightest degree; and finally, when the sentence of the court condemned him 'to be blown from a gun,' he looked with an almost triumphant glance, on his late friends who stood horror-stricken around him.

The General was perfectly overcome. His former friends and brother officers shuddered with dread at his coming fate; for though the sentence was strictly just, yet many who had never seen this mode of execution drew back with terror and disgust. Surhat was the calmest man on that field as we wheeled back into line preparatory to the dreadful scene.

We took open order, and the prisoner marched along the line, and up again between the ranks. He was then taken to a spot some hundred yards in front of our centre. No coffin was there to receive his remains, as I had previously seen at military executions,—no friends to take his body away after his doom had been completed,—so clearly was it foreseen that his annihilation would be complete, his whole frame scattered to the winds, the morsels left in all directions for the beasts and birds of prey.

The troops were now 'told off' in three divisions, the wings wheeled up, the artillery brought into the centre; thus, as it were, reforming a hollow square, except on the side on which the prisoner stood. A single gun was now brought up, turned round, and unlinked. The drivers unwillingly trotted away to the rear. The prisoner was desired to advance; he did so within a pace of the muzzle. The deputy provost marshal produced a cord with which to bind him to the gun. For the first time Surhat seemed shaken. He made a special request that he might not be tied down. The general was solicited, and consented that it should be so. The prisoner turned upon him a look of the sincerest and most heartfelt gratitude, shook hands after the European manner with the provost marshal, and after receiving his directions, agitatedly given, walked boldly up to the cannon, and pressing his body against the muzzle, threw his arms round the gun itself, gave one last glance, and stooped his head down to the piece. At the same instant a signal was given, the ready lighted match was applied to the touch hole, a flash of fire, a volume of smoke, a roaring sound re-echoed from the neighbouring hills, and all was over.

A few drops of blood, a few scattered remnants, scarcely recognisable as ever having belonged to humanity, were all that now remained of the once proud, the generous, the brave chieftain, who by thus choosing a doom which brought total annihilation, seemed determined to leave behind him no record of the basely fallen chief, the hated name of traitor!